

Elephants, Water Parks, and Your Roof: A Connection to Missouri's Volcanic History

Leaders – Ted Heath and Aaron Johnson, CPG

Date – Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Times – 7:00 am – 5:00 pm

From the St. Louis metro area, it is a two-hour scenic drive to and through the heart of the Ste. Francois Mountains to the small town of Annapolis, Missouri. Here, the group will visit a Precambrian volcanic surface mine and processing plant where a variety of rhyolites are extracted and processed. With a little crushing, sorting and dyeing, these granules eventually find themselves attached to asphalt shingles on the roof of many of your homes.

A 30-minute drive from Annapolis will take the tour to Johnson Shut-Ins State Park. At this magnificent park, the pristine water of the Black River has carved through a variety of volcanic rhyolites forming cliffs, deep pools, miniature waterfalls, and hundreds of flowing crevasses that swimmers and climbers enjoy throughout much of the year. Many people believe this is the most scenic location in Missouri and is among the most photographed locations in Missouri. Some call it God's Water Park.

From Johnson Shut-Ins, our tour will proceed to Graniteville, Missouri, where we will visit the quarry from which the world-renowned Missouri Red Granite is extracted. The Missouri Red was once used to pave streets, make street light posts, cover prominent buildings and handsomely mark millions of graves among many other applications. From 1880-1900, it was among the most widely used ornamental building stones in the world. Today, the operation caters to mostly manufacturers of rather large memorials and monuments.

At the conclusion of our industrial look at Missouri Red Granite, the group will head to the next stop, just a few hundred yards away, the magnificent boulders of Elephant Rocks State Park. The elephant rocks, which were formed from 1.5-billion-year-old granite, are giant boulders that stand end-to-end like a train of circus elephants. A 1-mile, paved, loop trail through the park provides an easy way to see the rocks. The central trail is an easy walk, and numerous smaller trails that vary in the level of physical challenge, splay from this central trail.

Both the processing plant and the quarry require hard hats, steel-toe shoes, a visible safety vest, and safety glasses. You will need to bring your own gear.



Johnson Shut-Ins State Park. Photo courtesy of Aaron Johnson.



Missouri Red Quarry. Photo courtesy of Keystone Memorials.



*The Elephant Rocks in Elephant Rocks State Park, Missouri. [Fredlyfish4](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Elephant_Rocks.JPG),
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